

Executive Director's Report

By Carol R. Collier

I was sworn in as the commission's executive director on September 9, 1998. A little over a year later I was given perhaps the most important assignment of my life. Four governors directed me and my staff to develop a new comprehensive water resources plan for the basin.

To assist us in the task, the governors called for the creation of a broad-based watershed advisory council. Members are now being selected and DRBC staff has begun initial work on our blueprint for the future.

The charge to develop the new plan is contained in a resolution signed by the governors of New York, Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and unveiled at a "Governors Summit" held September 29, 1999, in Camden, N.J.

The resolution says in part: "... the Delaware River, the last major un-dammed river in the East, is a unique ecosystem that provides a multitude of natural, economic, and recreational benefits for all its inhabitants by being a key part of the Eastern Flyway, having the most abundant horseshoe crab population in the world, having wetlands designated of international significance for shorebirds, and having the second largest freshwater port in the nation."

It goes on to state: "... as trustees of the basin's natural resources, the Delaware River Basin Governors have a shared duty to protect, conserve, and manage the Delaware River Basin waters and ecosystem ... We, the Governors, challenge the basin's community to develop a unifying vision for the basin ... and direct the Delaware River Basin Commission to develop a new comprehensive water resources plan ..., periodically compile an environmental goals and



Delaware Governor Thomas R. Carper signs the resolution calling for a new comprehensive water resources plan for the basin as New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman looks on.
(Photo by Clarke Rupert)

indicators report, and establish a watershed advisory council.”

This charge from the governors provides an opportunity for DRBC to work with the basin community in establishing the plan and also to look internally at our operations. In this upcoming year we will make an extensive review of our existing water resource regulations and propose areas of change. We will seek your input in this effort.

As we look to the future it is important that we take a systems approach and avoid fragmentation of the issues.

Another issue to tackle is whether DRBC should have differing roles in the management of interstate waters (shared waters) *vs* intrastate tributaries.

Of course, one of our most critical roles is the management and allocation of water for water supply and in-stream uses. We have embarked on a Flow Needs Strategic Study to better understand flow issues and determine the relationship of flows to river uses, from fishing to boating to water supply. Among other things,

the study will help the commission ascertain if additional storage might be required to meet both flow and water supply needs.

As we look to the future it is important that we take a systems approach and avoid fragmentation of the issues. As Aldo Leopold stated: “Everything is connected to everything else.”

In our evaluation of goals and directions we must consider the environment, the basin community and the economy.

Other exciting things are happening during my watch. I want to mention just one other: the creation of a bipartisan congressional task force to heighten the legislative profile of important river basin issues.

The House Delaware River Basin Task Force is co-chaired by U.S. Reps. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), Robert Borski, (D-Pa.), Michael Castle (R-Del.), and Rush Holt (D-N.J.).

Briefings on Capitol Hill about developments in the basin have been held and congressional staff trips to the basin are planned. It is hoped that the task force can garner support for federal funding of our programs and basin-related projects.

Being a steward of a “National Treasure” is a difficult but incredibly rewarding job. I look forward to working with all of you as we plan the future of the Delaware River Basin.